



CITY OF TAUNTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

*City Hall Break Room
141 Oak Street, Taunton, MA 02780*

Minutes - Regular Meeting Wednesday, July 10, 2019 at 6:00pm City Hall Break Room - 141 Oak St., Taunton, MA

Meeting called to order at 6:18pm by Jonathan Gray

Members Present: Jonathan Gray, Carol Doherty, William McCaffrey, Katie Roberts, and Melissa Santos.

Members Not Present: Arthur Lopes and Jenna Gouveia

Jonathan introduces Melissa Santos who was recently appointed by the Mayor as an alternate on the Ag Com. Melissa talks briefly about her background. She teaches English at BCC and she focuses on food and agriculture.

Public Input: a member of the public, Toni Graca, is in attendance. She holds an associates degree in ag sci, and is attending UMass Amherst studying in their Sustainable Food and Farming program this Fall. She is interested in the Commission's work, and wanted to come in to watch.

Approval of past meeting minutes.

- Jonathan says that they are still in draft state and need further revision.
- **Motion to table approval of minutes. Motion passes.**

Ag Com Webpage

- Jon has consulted with Paul Arikian the IT Director and that the Taunton Ag Com webpage is up. Jon will begin adding content to the webpage. If anyone has additional items they would like to have added to the website to send it to Jon.

Report back from meetings with stakeholders:

- Jonathan says that he has spoken to the owner of the property located at 551 Tremont Street, Chase Farm. They have decided to sell most of the property into development, no perceived future of connecting owners with potential farmers.
- Jonathan has postponed a meeting with the Superintendent of Schools until he can find time. Carol Doherty says to contact Superintendent's Secretary, Wendy Devine, in regards to meeting with Jon and any other Ag Comm members able, Carol is interested in joining. Katie Roberts is interested in attending meeting as well, if schedule allows.
- On Fraga Farm, Jon says the NRCS is coming to Fraga Farm property to assess appropriate agriculture use and areas suitable to be cleared by Chip Fraga who has said he would donate equipment time. The NRCS connection was made through Bill Napolitano.

Discussion of the 5-Year Work Plan:

- Carol indicated she had a networking meeting with Tanya Ventura, Ruth Lazare, Kim Fielding-Payne, and Nancy Lee Wood regarding food deserts in Taunton. She suggested an advisory sub-committee for the Ag Com that could be created to advise on, for example, food access.
- City Councilor Barry Sanders would like to have work plan presented to the City Council for review. Katie suggests we make our current draft task specific and more goal oriented for city council and the general public.
- Jonathan says that an example of a AgCom mission statement was provided from the Town of Carver in the MDAR Ag Com handbook provided. There was agreement Carver's mission statement is too long, and the Ag Com should not be "negotiators," but more so be "intermediaries." Although many Ag Coms can help provide conflict resolution between farmers and the public. Additionally, we should include 'partnerships' in our mission statement.
- Taunton Ag Com mission statement could read something like this: "The central mission of the Commission shall be to support and grow current and future agricultural ventures and initiatives in Taunton through education, technical assistance, advocacy, and partnerships within the community." No vote on this was taken. More discussion needed.
- Some initial goals for the Commission include branding, making entities that we support aware that we exist, supporting healthy food access efforts, a communications plan, and a website.
- Carol says that right now is also the data collection phase for us. The Carver Ag Com work plan includes an inventory of agriculture in the Town. Jon says, on a related point, that some items under "policy" on our draft work plan include Board of Health, zoning, water, and sewer. These different policies need to be compiled and assessed by our Commission doing an inventory and summary of those policies. We should create a short document outlining what City of Taunton policies affect current agricultural operations are. This would be a part of our policy inventory process, a segment of our overall inventory process along with what ag operations are currently existing in Taunton.
- Jonathan discussed what a right-to farm (RTF) community is. Many towns surrounding Taunton are a RTF community. Currently, Taunton is not a right to farm community. Carol asked how is it different than what the city already has? Jonathan said that Right to Farm (RTF) reframes state law so that the town or city sees itself as supportive of agriculture, a statement by the city that it supports agriculture, includes signage, and

notification to new home buyers, as well as a conflict resolution procedure. Carol replied that we could make it a goal to be to investigate what is involved with implementing right to farm in Taunton, and whether it is worth it or not.

- Carol stated that in New Haven, Connecticut a connected group of clinicians and physicians would give clients of a health center prescriptions to the New Haven Farm. Physicians would follow their progress as they increased their intake of fruits and vegetables. Results have been impressive. Lots of food donated. She suggested people should Google it. Jon stated there is statewide momentum behind creating a Massachusetts Food is Medicine State Plan which is related to this. That can be googled as well.
- Melissa stated it was unfortunate that the Silver City Farmers Market (SCFM) at Hopewell Park did not work out. Jon said the only organization willing to host the SCFM was the Downtown Taunton Foundation (DTF), where they hosted a few months worth of markets in 2018 on the Taunton Green. The market closed in September ahead of schedule because there wasn't enough customers to make it worth it for the farms participating.
- Jon stated he will attempt to incorporate these discussions into a new work plan draft. He will send out a Google link for revisions to be made by Commissioners.

Announcements:

- Bristol Commons Community Garden plots still available
- The Church Green Farmers Market at the First Parish Church on Church Green will be on Sundays 9-1, July through October.

Motion to adjourn at 8:13 pm. Motion passes.